

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PROPOSAL

Create a new Illinois Department of Education responsible for the administration of education in Illinois. Utilize the Department to launch an initiative that will streamline state-level education administration and reduce non-instructional costs for districts, saving as much as \$1 billion over four years for reinvestment into classroom instruction.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

Legislation will remove all administrative powers and responsibilities from ISBE and place them in the Department of Education under the Governor.

Creating a Department of Education that is directly accountable to the Governor will profoundly improve the way education services are delivered in the State of Illinois. The Department can transform education by eliminating rules and procedures that force districts to spend money and time on compliance activities. It will partner with education entities to reduce a host of administrative and non-instructional costs for districts, and will generally operate more efficiently.

Streamline Rules and Bureaucracy

Projected Outcome: A Marked Reduction in the 2,800 Pages of Rules

The Department will work with local educators to streamline the 2,800 pages of rules governing education in Illinois. The results of this cooperative effort will allow districts to shift their focus from administration to student learning, and will ensure that a larger percentage of money and time is directed towards the classroom.

Create Regional Administrative Service Centers

Projected Savings: \$12-20 Million a Year

The Department will partner with Regional Offices of Education and local districts to provide schools with better administrative services at a fraction of the current costs. This will be accomplished through the creation of “regional service centers,” which will pool basic administrative functions like accounting, auditing, and accounts payable. The use of regional service centers could save schools \$12-20 million a year.

Create a Statewide Benefits Purchasing Center

Projected Savings: \$80 to \$180 Million

The Department will create a statewide educator benefits purchasing center. Like all employers, schools have shouldered a significant cost increase to provide health insurance for employees. Creating a statewide insurance system will decrease the cost of purchasing coverage for school employees by pooling purchasing, eliminating premium taxes, and decreasing administrative costs. The pool will allow local districts to determine benefit levels as part of the collective bargaining process.

Creating a purchasing center will also address the funding problems of TRIP, the retired teacher’s health care program. Active teachers, retired teachers, local school districts, and the state now contribute to the

program, which has experienced significant cost increases annually.

All told, the creation of a statewide insurance pool will save \$80 million in administrative costs, and could potentially save up to an additional \$100 million through the statewide negotiation of better prices and pooling of risks.

Create a Statewide Purchasing Center

Projected Savings: \$550 Million Over Four Years

The Department will create a “state center” for school districts to purchase products from state-designated suppliers. Contract prices offered by suppliers will be negotiated by purchasing cooperatives and larger school districts, and in existing state contracts available to all schools. The suppliers will be able to provide products at a much lower price than is available to an individual school district. In FY 02 schools spent \$5.76 billion on services, supplies and equipment. According to an analysis conducted by McKinsey & Co. Consulting Firm, the creation of a state center could save the State of Illinois up to \$550 million within a four-year period.

Price Variation on Items Purchased by School

Area	Item	High	Low
Janitoria	Safety signs: 6 pack	87.73	54.35
Art supplies	Elmer's School glue -- 4 oz 6 pack	4.26	3.09
Art supplie	Elmer's School Glue -- 1 Gallon	9.78	5.66
Janitorial	Rubbermaid dual action sweeper -- 4 pack	207.47	115.14
School	Safety Scissors -- 12 pac	11.38	3.55
Computer	Lexmark inkjet cartridge 10N0016	24.73	11.84

Renew \$550 Million School Construction Program

Projected Savings: \$160 million Over Four Years

The new Department of Education will provide \$500 million for school construction and reinstate the School Maintenance Grant Program with \$50 million in funding.

The new program will be revised to allow districts more flexibility. Schools will be authorized to spend construction dollars on the creation of pre-k and kindergarten classroom space and shared use facilities, as well as recreational, pre-school, and before and after school facilities. Under the current law local school districts may continue to apply for funds to build additional classrooms or to build an entire school. The Capital Development Board will oversee revisions in the School Construction Law. By working with the Capital Development Board to manage the school construction program, the Department of Education will reduce the costs associated with constructing schools by 5%. While districts typically pay 6% for project management, the development of a statewide center of school project managers will allow CDB to deliver this service for a 1% fee and save the schools \$160 million over a four year period. Those savings will allow for the construction of fourteen more schools and 350 more classrooms than the State Board of Education is presently capable of funding.

Streamline Funding Applications and Reporting

The Department will streamline applications for state funding by rewriting programs to cut bureaucracy, thus simplifying the process by which school districts request state assistance. It will also eliminate elaborate applications and funding approval processes, and reform the lengthy, inefficient claims and reimbursement process. Rather than referring to these processes as justification for a bloated bureaucracy, the new Department of Education will move towards the goal of a single consolidated funding application.

Operate the Administration of Education More Efficiently

Finally, the Department will reduce the overall size of state bureaucracy. Bottom line – the State Department of Education can and will do more with less. The new agency will deliver all of the results outlined above for less than the 80% of the funding and 60% of the headcount it takes to run ISBE. It will accomplish these goals both by canceling unnecessary lobbying, pr, and consulting contracts, and by eliminating redundant functions like the audit of school districts that are statutorily required to have independent audits conducted by Certified Public Accountants.

The agency will be smaller and more efficient than ISBE because it will not manage IT facilities, internal auditors, and legal staff internally, but will allow these functions to be handled by a system that currently manages thirty other agencies.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ISBE?

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has failed in its responsibility to lead education in Illinois. ISBE has not delivered on its responsibility to improve education outcomes for students, and has evolved into an organization that is focused on creating administrative rules, processes and reports to which schools must comply. As a result of ISBE's lack of leadership, only 46% of taxpayer dollars spent on education in FY 02 went to classroom instruction.

As a bureaucracy accountable solely to its board, ISBE has been defined by mismanagement and misspending. It has become a haven for highly-paid bureaucrats and has failed to deliver on two of its core responsibilities: ensuring the safety of students and testing student achievement.

Given the failed priorities of the Illinois State Board of Education, it is no surprise that the education system in Illinois is failing.

SIX PROBLEMS WITH ISBE

I. ISBE has Failed to Produce Results.

Reading

§ Only 31% of Illinois fourth-graders who took the national reading test scored proficient or better, which ranks the state 30th in the country for this discipline. (NAEP 2003)

§ 38% of Illinois third-graders do meet state standards in reading. This number has remained relatively consistent over the last four years. (2000-2003 ISAT Third-Grade Reading Scores)

§ 39.6% of Illinois fifth-graders do not meet state standards in reading. This is only a marginal improvement from 2000, when 41.2% did not meet state standards. (2000-2003 ISAT Fifth-Grade Reading Scores)

§ 36.3% of Illinois eighth-graders do not meet state standards in reading. The percentage of students not achieving standards has grown by 8.2 percentage points since 2000. (2000-2003 ISAT Eight-Grade Reading Scores)

Writing

§ 41% of Illinois eight-graders did not meet 2003 state standards in writing; this represents an increase of a full 10.8% points since 2000. (2000-2003 ISAT Eighth- Grade Writing Scores)

§ Over a four-year period fifth-grade writing scores have declined, while third- grade scores have remained relatively stable.

PSAE (Eleventh-Grade Test)

§ Over a three year period PSAE scores have decreased or remained stagnate in all categories except science, where the number of students who met or exceeded standards improved by a marginal 1.1%. (PSAE scores 2001-2003)

§ 43.6 % of Illinois eleventh-graders did not meet 2003 state standards for reading. (PSAE reading scores 2001-2003)

ACT Testing

§ 48% of Illinois 11th graders taking the PSAE/ACT scored below a 20, indicating that they are "not ready for post-secondary education without some level of remediation." (PSAE/ACT – Assessment Scores)

§ Illinois students who did not take the “core” curriculum (ACT-recommended course load of four or more years in English, three or more years in math, three or more years of natural sciences and three or more years of social sciences) averaged an 18.5, almost a full point below the national “non-core” average of 19.3. (PSAE/ACT – Assessment Scores)

II. ISBE is a Burden on Local Schools

Instead of helping districts to improve education, ISBE’s main function is creating additional administrative burdens for teachers and schools. ISBE paperwork requires local teachers, superintendents, and principals to waste valuable time that could be better spent on instruction.

ISBE is a giant bureaucracy that forces schools to devote their time to complying with complicated rules and filing mounds of reports. Rather than acting as a support network for school districts, it spends the majority of its time reviewing and approving paperwork.

- ISBE collects and reviews 93 different kinds of financial reports and claim forms annually, quarterly and sometimes monthly from 892 different districts.
- ISBE has created more than 2,800 pages of administrative rules to govern education. (By contrast, the

King James Bible has 1009 pages, and it covers all of Christianity; the Torah has 620 pages, and it covers all of Judaism; the Qur'an has 635 pages, and it covers all of Islam.)

· This paperwork burden forces many schools to hire full-time support staff or to redirect the efforts of teachers and principals to fulfill these requirements.

ISBE duplicates services that other organizations already perform.

· ISBE maintains a staff of thirty-eight responsible for auditing district claims and financial forms even though districts are required by law to have them audited by independent Certified Public Accountants.
· Such duplication means that ISBE employees are unable to provide technical assistance to local districts, and instead must concentrate on certifying paperwork or performing duplicate responsibilities.

III. Only 46% of all School Expenditures are Spent on Direct Instruction

Despite the fact that education funding is increasingly limited by a struggling economy, ISBE has created a bureaucratic system that forces schools to channel the majority of their resources into administration and operations. Instead of working with districts to reduce non-instructional costs, ISBE has remained focused on its own internal functions. An analysis conducted by Central Management Services, the Governor's Office of Management and Budget, and the Capital Development Board with the aid of independent consulting firms has identified as much as \$1 billion in potential savings over four years in non-instructional costs. These savings can be realized by the Department's facilitation of a partnership between school districts that improves purchasing, benefits consolidation, and shared administrative services and that will manage school construction more efficiently.

In 2002 schools spent \$7.1 billion on administration and operations.

School District Expenditure for Fiscal Year 2002

Category

Expenditures

Description

Instruction

\$ 9.043 billion

Instruction

Student and Community Services

\$ 3.4 billion

Pupil Support (Social Work, Guidance, Psychology); Instructional Support (curriculum planning, teacher training); Student Transportation; Food Service; Community Services, Payment to Other Governmental Entities

Administration and Operations

\$ 7.107 billion

General Administration; School Administration; Business Support Services, Central Support; Debt

Service
Total
\$19.550 billion

According to 2001 data from the National Center for Educational Statistics, Illinois districts spend less on instruction as a percentage of total expenditures than all but ten states.

- Illinois ranked 40th in terms of education spending on instruction.
- In 2001 Illinois ranked 16th in per student spending.
- In 2001 50.7% of total education dollars went to instruction. In FY04 only 46% of dollars are earmarked for this category.

The number of administrators is growing at twice the rate as the number of classroom teachers.

- The number of administrators increased by 25% between 1997 and 2002, with an annual growth of 5.1%. That is more than twice the growth rate in the number of teachers, which increased by 11% at an annual rate of 2.2%.
- Over the same period the average administrator's salary increased by 25% to \$88,000, growing 5.1% annually.
- By contrast, the average teacher's salary has grown at a mere 3.5% annually, and falls just under \$50,000 in 2002.

IV. ISBE is a Bureaucracy Defined by Mismanagement, Waste, and Misspending

ISBE has used its budget to pad the pocketbooks of allies for external PR, lobbying, and legal advice, all at the expense of the people of Illinois.

- Despite the current fiscal crisis, ISBE renewed a \$240,000 lobbying contract for assistance in developing "political strategy" from the Washington, D.C.-based lobbying firm Barbour, Griffith and Rogers. In the last four years ISBE paid the firm almost \$1 million for lobbying services. The contract was renewed even as Haley Barbour, a key partner, was busy campaigning for the Governorship in Mississippi.
- In addition ISBE spends \$1 million on outside legal counsel each year, despite having a legal staff of twenty and access to representation through the Attorney General's Office.

ISBE has the highest paid bureaucrats in state government.

- ISBE's forty highest paid managers make an average of \$90,000 a year.
- The nine highest-paid ISBE employees make an average of \$122,000-a-year, which is more than all but five state agency directors (average salary of \$113,000), more than the average salary for school district superintendents (\$119,700) and that of the regional school superintendents (\$88,400), and almost three times the average teacher's salary.
- The Interim Director of Certification and Professional Development, the lowest paid of the nine, makes more than the Director of The Illinois Emergency Management Agency, The Illinois Adjutant General, and five other agency directors.

SALARIES FOR THE TOP NINE HIGHEST PAID ISBE EMPLOYEES

State Superintendent

\$225,000

Interim Director, Certification and Professional Development

\$100,392

Director, Human Resources

\$102,000

Director, Governmental Relations

\$103,092

Director, Information Technology

\$103,728

Director, Special Education Department

\$105,648

Director, Planning and Performance Department

\$116,412

Director, Operations Department

\$119,880

General Counsel

\$128,880

ISBE chose to cut critical programs rather than reduce administrative budgets.

- After the Governor acted to cut administrative waste in the ISBE budget, ISBE chose to discontinue certifying private schools and cut support for GED testing.
- In lieu of canceling frivolous Washington contracts and bringing top administrative salaries in line with other state agencies, ISBE literally “turned off the phone” for teachers seeking certification.
- ISBE made these cuts while fighting to retain non-core functions such as regulating vocational schools. These functions could have been transferred to other agencies where they would be administered more efficiently. ISBE would then be able to focus on its core responsibilities.

ISBE’s mismanagement endangered the public safety of students until the Governor intervened.

- Two years ago forty-two students in a Will County school became ill and were hospitalized after eating chicken tenders contaminated with ammonia that were provided by an ISBE managed food program. Even after other schools returned the food because of the contamination, ISBE failed to notify the districts where the students became ill. Two ISBE officials were indicted in relation to the incident.
- In response the Governor intervened and directed IDPH and IDOA to handle all food complaints in the ISBE managed program.

V. ISBE has Failed in its Basic Functions: Testing Student Achievement and Certifying Teachers

ISBE is chronically late when reporting scores.

- This year ISBE failed to provide local test data to school districts until late November, almost a full month after the date by which districts are statutorily required to disseminate results to parents. Standardized test results are not provided to school districts in a timely manner, diminishing their usefulness to teachers.
- In the last four years ISBE has twice failed to provide this information to school districts in a timely manner.
- Under the current system, even when results are provided to teachers “on time,” they are not received until the class has already moved on. Teachers are unable to use these results to modify their curricula or teaching methods.

ISBE produces error-ridden reports which mislabel schools as failing.

- According to a Chicago Tribune analysis, the 2003 School Report Cards contained 34,261 errors affecting 75% of Illinois schools.
- ISBE’s errors mistakenly identified 368 schools as failing.
- The same Chicago Tribune analysis identified more than 100,000 errors in the report for the last two years.

ISBE designed and administers a complex teacher certification process, which requires teachers to complete and file as many as 100 or more pages of forms in order to be recertified.

- Under the ISBE system a teacher who fulfills his recertification requirements by attending six half-day education workshops and who participates in forty-five two-hour professional development activities is required to complete and file fifty-four forms totaling 107 pages.
- After creating a complicated and cumbersome set of rules to govern recertification, ISBE has eliminated nearly all forms of technical assistance. Teachers must spend time filling out numerous forms online or on paper instead of concentrating on teaching.
- This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that the rules on recertification continue to expand and change, and teachers must adapt to the changes without assistance from those who most fully understand them.

ISBE has been slow to develop the means by which new teachers can receive continuing certification.

- In 1999 Illinois introduced a multi-tiered licensure system for teachers. This bi-partisan effort called for a four-year initial certificate for beginning teachers. ISBE dragged its feet in approving the professional development necessary for recertification.
- As a result there are currently 7,000 teachers in bureaucratic limbo.

VI. ISBE is Not Accountable to Anyone.

The State Board of Education is designed to report to the Governor through an appointed board. Due to staggered term appointments, a Governor is not able to influence the board until his second term in office. The current structure of education governance in Illinois ensures that ISBE is not accountable to anyone.

READING

PROPOSAL 1: EARLY CHILDHOOD BLOCK GRANT

Send 25,000 more at-risk children a year to pre-school over a three year period.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

Last year the Governor increased the Early Childhood Block Grant by \$29.4 million so that 8,330 more at-risk children could go to preschool. In FY05 and 06 the Governor plans to continue with his commitment to send 25,000 at-risk children to preschool by expanding the Block Grant to serve 16,670 more.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

As part of the definitive Chicago Longitudinal Study, at-risk children who received high-quality early education are:

- 20 % more likely to complete high school
- 42 % less likely to be arrested as a juvenile for a violent offense
- 52 % less likely to be abused and neglected
- 41 % less likely to be placed in special education

Reynolds, the Director of the Study, has also documented economic returns such as:

- Averted costs to crime victims
- Reduced child welfare expenditures
- Greater earning potential due to educational advancement

Overall, every dollar invested in the high-quality preschool program returned \$7.14 in individual, educational, social welfare and socioeconomic benefits.

PROPOSAL 2: IMAGINATION LIBRARIES PROGRAM

Provide books for all children in Illinois from birth until age five, so that they are in possession of a “personal library” by the time they enter kindergarten.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

The State of Illinois will partner with the Dollywood Foundation of Tennessee and the Illinois Hospital Association to send free, age-appropriate books to every child in Illinois. Parents will receive the first book in the hospital (all Illinois hospitals have agreed to participate) and can then register to receive twelve books each year for the first five years of their child’s life. At age five each child in the State of Illinois will have a personal library of sixty books. The list of books has been approved by a National Book Selection Committee, and will include such titles as Peek-a-Boo Moon, The Snowy Day, Whistle for Whistle, The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come, and The Gingerbread Boy. Many of the books will be bilingual in English and Spanish.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The Imagination Libraries Program will increase statewide literacy. Without intervention, reading

difficulties can develop early in life. Language development during the preschool years, in particular the development of a rich vocabulary, is important for every child's preparation for formal reading instruction. Research has shown that gaps in children's reading skills and knowledge observed in the first few years of formal schooling can persist in later grades and affect standardized test scores. A High/Scope Educational Research survey demonstrated that when enrolled in the program, 85% of parents read to their children almost daily and children enter school better prepared to learn. Project Success will further reinforce these goals by educating parents on the best methods for interactive parent/child reading time.

PROPOSAL 3: READING SPECIALISTS

Put a reading specialist in elementary schools that fail to meet reading achievement standards.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

\$15 million will be allocated for the Reading Improvement Block Grant so that more schools can employ a reading specialist. School districts serving grades K-3 that have been identified as failing to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years on the state ISAT tests in reading will receive the new funds, with approximately \$4.5 million going to Chicago Public Schools and the remainder disbursed throughout the state.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) only 31% of Illinois fourth-graders who took the national reading test scored proficient or better, which ranks Illinois 30th in the country for this discipline. The situation is critical.

With the expert assistance of a reading specialist, both students and teachers will benefit; students will benefit from more focused, individualized attention, and teachers will benefit by learning techniques to identify struggling readers and strategies for improving reading performance.

PROJECT SUCCESS

PROPOSAL

Recreate Project Success, a comprehensive, systematic delivery system that responds to the needs of children and their families by using the school as the hub of service.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

Project Success will ensure that children and their families receive the services they need to be successful in school. There are six core components for service delivery:

- Basic preventive health care for children and families
- Proper nutrition and nutrition education
- Prevention and rehabilitative mental health services for children and families

- Services that will protect children and promote the stability of the family
- Substance abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment for children and their families
- Social activities, which enhance positive interaction within families

Collaborative models at both the state and local levels bring together service providers, community leaders, faith-based organizations, and parents to deliver services to children at or near their schools.

Local Governing Boards made up of parents, community-based service providers, school representatives, and local leaders will identify the needs of children and develop a plan to meet those specific needs.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The Governor's renewed commitment to Project Success will send the message to communities that it is important for local agencies, faith-based institutions, and other organizations to work together to ensure that students are healthy and ready to learn in the classroom.

Figure 1. 3rd Grade IGAP Reading Scores

HIPS: High Implementing Project Success Schools

Figure 2. 6th Grade IGAP Reading Scores

IGAP: Illinois Goals Assessment Program (the Illinois statewide achievement testing system in place at time of data.)

Figure 3. 3rd Grade IGAP Math Scores

Figure 4. 6th Grade IGAP Math Scores

A U of I study shows that in comparing 1992 scores with 1998 scores, achievement test scores in both reading and math at both grade levels increased at the high implementing Project Success schools. Over the same period, at the non-Project Success schools, IGAP reading scores at both grade levels showed an overall decline in performance. Finally, although math scores showed a steady increase at the non-Project Success schools, scores increased at a higher rate at the selected Project Success schools.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND PREPARATION

PROPOSAL 1: CERTIFICATE RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS

Ensure that teachers currently providing reading instruction in the elementary grades are continuously updated on how to best teach reading.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

Legislation will require that all pre K - 8 teachers with a standard and/or master certificate complete 50% of their certificate renewal requirements by taking courses in reading strategies at a university, or by participating in various professional development opportunities which will expand their knowledge and application of best practices in the teaching of reading.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Reading is fundamental to success in all other aspects of education. In FY03 only 62% of third-graders and 60% of fifth-graders met or exceeded the Illinois Learning Standards in reading. Many current elementary teachers do not have a background in how best to teach reading or identify and resolve reading problems in their students. It is imperative that students have access to the best reading instruction and teachers during their formative years of education.

PROPOSAL 2: PROFESSIONAL TEACHER STANDARDS BOARD

Create a Professional Teacher Standards Board, protecting current and future teachers seeking certification from the ISBE bureaucracy.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

The Professional Teacher Standards Board will administer the certification of teachers and other school personnel. The board will also be responsible for the approval of teacher and administrator preparation programs. All certification and program approval processes currently handled by the State Board of Education and the State Teacher Certification Board will be transferred to the Professional Teacher Standards Board.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The creation of a Professional Teacher Standards Board is critical as Illinois continues to face shortages in certain teaching disciplines. The IL State Board of Education has failed in its responsibilities both to certify teachers in a timely fashion and to provide much needed assistance to teachers regarding recertification. When faced with budget cuts, ISBE chose to lay off several employees in the Certification division rather than eliminate a contract with a national lobbying firm. Equally noteworthy is ISBE's recent decision to close its Certification office in the city of Chicago. It is imperative that these responsibilities be vested in an entity that regards teacher certification, recertification, and preparation as its core mission.

PROPOSAL 3: ILLINOIS FUTURE TEACHER CORPS SCHOLARSHIP

The Illinois Future Teacher Corps Scholarship (IFTCC) supports students who commit to teach in understaffed schools and shortage disciplines with scholarships of \$5,000 and \$10,000.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

IFTC was created by the Governor last year and provides scholarships of \$5,000 and \$10,000 each year to students who agree to teach for five years in Illinois public schools in shortage disciplines and regions. ISAC awarded \$5,000 scholarships to the majority of students and \$10,000 scholarships to 250 students who pledged to teach in both a teacher shortage area and a hard-to-staff school. In FY 04 \$7,050,000 was

appropriated for this scholarship program and allocated through scholarships to 1,150 students.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Schools reported almost 1,400 unfilled teaching positions on October 1, 2003. IFTC will address the issue of teacher shortages in certain under-privileged schools and understaffed fields of education.

PROPOSAL 4: TASK FORCE FOR ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO TEACHER CERTIFICATION

The Governor is forming a statewide task force to study the issue of alternative routes to teacher certification. The task force will be comprised of representatives from the K-12 community, teacher unions, university teacher education departments, the General Assembly, the Governor's Office, and the business community.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Despite the work in creating the IFTC, Illinois continues to face a teacher shortage in certain teaching disciplines, and teacher and administrator retirements will likely intensify the problem. In fact, according to Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) 4,915 teachers retired last year, a significant increase from the 3556 who retired in 2000. Consequently, alternative routes to certification must be explored.

HEALTHIER STUDENTS

PROPOSAL 1

Ban soda and junk food from school vending machines.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

Schools will be required to remove all soda and junk food from vending machines. House Minority Leader Tom Cross and Governor Blagojevich have agreed to support this legislation.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Overweight and unhealthy children are an epidemic in America. More than three times as many children are considered overweight as compared to twenty years ago. Type II diabetes has increased by 700% since 1960. Studies have shown that carbonated drinks are the single biggest source of refined sugars in the American diet. Schools that have soda vending machines should not be adversely affected by the legislation banning these products, since both Coke and Pepsi produce healthy alternatives like Dasani, Minute-maid, Aquafina and Tropicana that can be sold in their place.

PROPOSAL 2

Support the Childhood Hunger Relief Act.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

SB 1400, as introduced by Senator Miguel del Valle, requires schools with 40% of the student population

eligible for free and reduced lunches to offer breakfast.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Studies have conclusively linked proper nutrition with cognitive ability. Unfortunately, the Food Research and Action Center reports that 7.8% of all Illinois households are “food-insufficient.” These children are placed at a distinct disadvantage in the classroom and on standardized testing. Providing free breakfast for children who are eligible for free and reduced lunches is not only a moral obligation, but also an important way to raise test scores and overall student achievement levels.

PROPOSAL 3

Explore the current P.E. curricula.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

As a state Illinois will examine ways to shift the focus of physical education from emphasizing sports-related skills to teaching lifelong fitness strategies and activities. This may be accomplished by integrating health and fitness monitoring and assessment training into the physical education curriculum. We will continue to explore strategies and options for a quality fitness-based statewide physical education curricula.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In their Fall 2000 report to the President, the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Education identified the nation’s young people as inactive, unfit, and increasingly overweight. The report also identified quality physical education curricula in schools as an important strategy for counteracting this trend. Currently, thirty percent of Illinois schools teach students how to develop, maintain, and self-assess health, fitness, and motor skills in physical education classes. The goal of this administration is to identify physical education curricula for all schools that not only engages students in physical activity, but also educates them on the importance of an overall active lifestyle.

PROPOSAL 4

Initiate the “Governor’s Fitness Challenge.”

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

The Governor’s fourth initiative for healthy schools will encourage students in grades four through six to become more physically active. This cross-curricular activity will be administered by the Department of Public Health and will focus on walking for fitness. Schools across the state will compete against one another for the honor of being named a “Governor’s Choice School for Physical Fitness.” The Governor would like to see three of the top schools receive a visit from a nationally known Illinois sports figure. Because the “Governor’s Fitness Challenge” will mirror the “Governor’s Hometown Challenge,” students in grades four through six will join their parents in walking for fitness.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The Governor's Fitness Challenge is a fun, interactive program to encourage students to get active. It is also an important life-lesson in wellness. Walking is the perfect activity for all fitness levels, and the competitive nature of the initiative is sure to generate a significant level of interest and participation.

PROPOSAL 5

Require that food inspections be performed at all private and public schools and that all food sold to schools be stored, transported, and processed in facilities inspected by the state.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

Through the combined efforts of the Departments of Agriculture and Public Health and local health authorities, all school food facilities will be inspected on a routine basis as a safeguard against numerous health-related problems. Additionally, all food processors, warehouses, and transporters of foods served to school children will be required to be licensed and inspected by the Department of Public Health.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Two years ago forty-two students in a Will County school became ill and were hospitalized after eating chicken tenders contaminated with ammonia that were provided by an ISBE managed food program. These dangerous situations are preventable.

Further, in light of the recent concern about mad cow disease, such scrutiny of the school food supply is of paramount importance.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

PROPOSAL 1: COMMUNITY SERVICE REQUIREMENT

Require forty hours of community service for high school graduation.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

Because every community is unique, each local school district will define what qualifies as service and where service is most needed. The community service requirement simply sets the parameters for how much time each individual student should devote to service. The Governor will create a foundation to assist schools in implementing the requirements and to ensure that adequate funding is provided for their efforts.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Students will learn the value of helping others---their schools, their communities, their families---through required participation in community service activities. The total educative experience of all Illinois students passing through the public education system will be enhanced.

PROPOSAL 2: THE GRADS INITIATIVE (Getting Results Achieving Dreams and Success)

Invest two million dollars in targeted communities to develop strategies that keep potential high-school dropouts in school. Coordinate the resources of over a dozen different state agencies to help students — especially Latino and African American students — receive a high school diploma.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

The GRADS Initiative, housed at the Department of Human Services, will coordinate the implementation of a program statewide and will provide resources (including a \$2 million grant) to community-based groups, local schools, and private providers for dropout prevention.

Currently a number of government agencies fund programs aimed at dropout prevention. However, there is no coordination of these programs, no collaboration among agencies, and consequently, no unified plan to focus resources and programs statewide. The GRADS Initiative will coordinate the efforts of different state agencies such as the Department of Human Services, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Department of Employment Security, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Children and Family Services to create a wrap-around interdepartmental structure that is more effective in these efforts.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

2000 Census data reported that over 200,000 people in Illinois, aged 16-24, had dropped out of high school. In Illinois, one out of every three Latino and one out of every five African-American youths is a high school dropout. Strategies for increasing minority representation in higher education must focus on graduating these students from high school and providing them with the tools they need to succeed. The GRADS Initiative will develop community/school specific intervention strategies which focus on individual students, as well as on the three major contexts which have the greatest potential to influence their academic success: the family, the school which they attend, and the community in which they live.

PROPOSAL 3: PREPARING STUDENTS for CAREERS

Expand the Illinois Tech Prep Program to prepare students who are not planning to attend a four-year university for vocational careers.

HOW WILL IT BE IMPLEMENTED?

Tech Prep programs begin in high school and lead to a two-year apprenticeship, an associate of applied science degree program, or a two-year certificate program. Tech Prep programs lead to employment in specific fields and are developed by all partners (schools, colleges, labor unions and employers). They are also designed to ensure that should students choose to pursue a four-year degree, they will easily be able to draw on courses taken during the program.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The Illinois Tech Prep program provides young people with a clear program by which to transition into the workforce. It boasts an exceptional 93% graduation rate, seven percentage points higher than the graduation rate for non-Tech Prep high-schoolers. Most importantly, it arms students with the tools necessary to remain competitive in a job market in which 80% of jobs require skilled labor.

